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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

REPORT

INFORMATION REPORT

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COUNTRY East Germany

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SUBJECT Supply Situation of Borax, Boric Acid or
Substitutes in East Germany

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1. The following industries of East Germany are dependent on a sufficient supply
of borax and boric acid for their production:

- a. Ceramics industry
- b. Optical glass industry
- c. Technical glass industry
- d. Enamel and enamel frit industry.

2. The main consumers in East Germany for borax, boric acid or acceptable substitutes
are the following enterprises:

- a. VEB Schott und Genossen, Jena (main supplier of optical glass for VEB Carl Zeiss, Jena).
- b. VEB Eisenhuettenwerk Thale (enamel industry).
- c. VEB Hermania, Schoenbeck (enamel frit).
- d. VEB Wandplattenwerke, Boitzenburg.
- e. VEB Schwerter Emaillierwerk, Lauter, Saxony.
- f. VEB Berliner Halbzeug und Metallwerk, East Berlin (ball bearings).
- g. Firm of Dr. Kueppers (a private enterprise located in an unspecified town in Saxony).
- h. The East German radio industry (a very minor consumer).

3. Up to the end of September 1955, East Germany's requirements for boric acid and borax were covered solely by imports. Annual requirements were about 3,000 metric tons of borax and about 800 metric tons of boric acid. These quantities were imported from Soviet Bloc countries.

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4. Due to difficulties in placing further contracts for the required quantities of borax and boric acid, difficulties which have increased since early 1955 and which threatened the maintenance of continuous production at VEB Schott und Genossen, the VEB Hermania, Schoenbeck initiated experiments aimed at obtaining borax and boric acid from Colemanite and Pandermit. Both Colemanite and Pandermit, are minerals containing boron. These minerals have a boron content averaging between 36 and 45 percent. Of these two minerals Colemanite is much harder and is much more difficult to grind. Therefore, East Germany, at least temporarily, concentrated on obtaining Colemanite and placed a contract for the import of 5,000 metric tons of Colemanite On the

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basis of 45 percent $B^2 O^3$ content, experiments have shown that from one metric ton of ground Colemanite up to one ton of boric acid or 0.7 ton of borax can be obtained. It is understood that certain fluids and/or other chemical elements are added to the ground Colemanite in this reduction process.

5. As of the end of September 1955, the procedure in East Germany was as follows: 30 metric tons of Colemanite had been obtained [REDACTED] so far. VEB Hermania, Schoenbeck, grinds the mineral and supplies the ground material to VEB Greiz at Doehlau in Saxony, which then reduces it into boric acid. It is then returned to VEB Hermania, Schoenbeck, where the boric acid is refined into borax. 25X1

6. The East German government in its 1956 investment plan has tentatively authorized the expenditure of three million DEM for the construction of a boric acid plant on the terrain belonging to VEB Hermania in Schoenbeck. Of the 5,000 metric tons of Colemanite to be imported [REDACTED] into East Germany during the 1956 plan year, which will cost the East German government \$200,000, 1,000 tons are to be turned immediately into boric acid and borax. The remaining 4,000 tons are to be placed in government reserve stocks. The remaining annual requirements from two to three thousand metric tons of borax are to be covered by imports as heretofore. 25X1

7. The East German State Planning Commission, which has been greatly concerned about the borax supply situation,¹ has been informed that China has mined minerals containing appreciable quantities of borax. However, they have taken no steps so far to acquire any of these minerals from China as they are convinced that mining and transportation difficulties will be unsurmountable for any practical purposes for some time to come.

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